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STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY HEALTH
LANSING

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To: Michigan Health Care Personnel

Recent reports of hospital-acquired infections and transmission of vaccine-preventable diseases involving non-immune health care personnel have demonstrated the need to increase immunization rates. Influenza is a viral infection that causes more than 200,000 Americans to be hospitalized and about 36,000 deaths each year in the United States.

Unvaccinated health care personnel are a key vehicle for the transmission of influenza in health care settings. You and your staff have close, frequent contact with patients at high risk for influenza disease and its related complications. Research has shown that many health care personnel continue to work while experiencing pre-clinical and symptomatic influenza infections. Studies show that most healthy adults can infect others with the flu up to 24 hours before they start having symptoms. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that all health care personnel get a yearly flu vaccine. Despite these recommendations, the National Health Interview Survey shows that three out of five health care personnel put themselves, their families, and their patients at risk by not being protected through vaccination.

Reducing influenza transmission from health care personnel to patients has become a top priority both nationally and in Michigan. To support this effort nationally, the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) has developed an accreditation requirement for influenza vaccination to be offered to all staff and licensed independent practitioners effective since January 1, 2007.

To address this problem at the state level, the Michigan Department of Community Health created the Flu Fighter Action Kit for Health Care Personnel. Available online at www.michigan.gov/flufighterkit, the kit offers a step-by-step approach, including ready-to-use materials such as planning templates, a campaign calendar and timeline, and flu educational resources to help you reach everyone in your health care organization. This fall and every fall, take the opportunity that a flu vaccine clinic provides to offer other immunizations as needed. Use the tools in the Flu Fighter Action Kit to plan your flu campaign this year and be sure to include Tdap, MMR, hep B and varicella vaccines in your plans.

Vaccination of health care personnel has been proven to reduce the transmission of influenza and many influenza-related complications that may cause death both for patients and health care personnel. Remember, anyone who shares air with patients should be vaccinated against influenza. Inactivated (i.e., killed virus) influenza vaccine and live, attenuated influenza (intranasal) vaccine are available for use in the United States.

Become a Flu Fighter. Protect yourself, your family, your colleagues, and your patients. Get vaccinated every year, and encourage your co-workers to do the same! Visit www.michigan.gov/flufighterkit to develop an influenza vaccination campaign in your facility today. For more information on influenza, visit www.michigan.gov/flu.

Sincerely,

Greg Holzman, MD, MPH
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Michigan Department of Community Health